

Spanish Fort - Ruins  
Sapelo Island, Georgia  
McIntosh Co.

2129  
HABS No. 14-129

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GA  
96-SAP

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
DISTRICT NO. 14

Historic American Buildings Survey  
P. Thornton Marye, District Officer  
62 Bartow St., N.W., Atlanta, Georgia

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SPANISH FORT  
Sapelo Island, McIntosh County  
Georgia

Owner: Mr. Howard Coffin.

Date of Erection: About 1680.

Architect and Builder: No record.

Present Condition: Ruins.

Number of Stories: No record.

Materials of Construction: Tabby.

Other Existing Records: See text.

Additional Data: See following pages.

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SPANISH FORT  
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Historical Notes:

The date of the fort is about 1680. Bolton<sup>1</sup> states: "Early in 1680 the storm broke across Savannah..... Fuertes and his soldiers withdrew to Zapala (Sapelo). Governor Cabrera sent more soldiers thither, with orders to construct a casa fuerte. It is apparently the remains of this fort that are plainly visible on Zapala Island today, and are known as "The Old Sugar House".<sup>2</sup>

The "Historical Sketches of the Golden Isles of Guale" by the Cloister Hotel<sup>3</sup> states that "at Sapelo the San José Mission has been restored by Mr. Coffin and the octagonal building (used as a fort) stands nearby". Cate<sup>4</sup> mentions that the "ruins of the mission have been rebuilt and made into a dwelling. The octagonal walls of the casa fuerte standing nearby, erected in 1680, are in a fair state of preservation. "

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<sup>1</sup> Bolton, H.E., The Debatable Land, 36.

<sup>2</sup> In ante-bellum days mills for grinding sugar cane were located in these buildings. See Cate, M.D., Our Todays and Yesterdays, 35.

<sup>3</sup> Page 34.

<sup>4</sup> Cate, M.D., Our Todays and Yesterdays, 43.

by Henry Chandler Foreman  
1976

SPANISH FORT  
Sapelo Island, McIntosh County  
Georgia

ARCHITECTURAL NOTES:

The ruined walls of the fort are about thirteen feet high and were built in an octagonal shape. The material of construction is tabby, a concrete mixture of lime, with shells, gravel or stone.

Adjacent to the ruins of the fort are the tabby walls of two rectangular buildings which in late years have been incorporated into a school building. These two tabby structures are probably the remains of the Jesuit San José Mission, built about 1567,<sup>1</sup> and described under "Historical Notes".

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<sup>1</sup> Historical Sketches of the Golden Isles of Guale, 22.

P. Thornton Marye  
District Officer, HABS

(Revised and rewritten  
at HABS Headquarters,  
1936, H.C.F.).

(Original sheet in  
field notebook).